

Study of the age composition of the Eurasian Woodcock between 2015-2024 in Hungary

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This thesis examined age structure and demographic indicators of the Eurasian woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) in Hungary, using 24.582 wings collected through national monitoring between 2015 and 2024. The main objectives were to determine the annual proportion of early juveniles with the total juvenile group, to assess the temporal trend of this ratio, to estimate the proportion of fully moulted adults, and to test correlations between these variables and the annual hunting bag.

The proportion of early juveniles showed moderate year-to-year variation but no consistent linear trend, indicating stable recruitment levels over the decade. Fully moulted adults remained dominant across the entire study, suggesting good survival and a balanced age composition within the population. Statistical analyses revealed only weak, negative correlations between harvest volume and both age-structure indicators, implying that annual bag size is more influenced by hunting effort and migration dynamics than by demographic shifts.

Additionally, no correlation was found between the annual proportion of early juveniles and fully moulted adults, suggesting that these indicators should be interpreted independently.

The study demonstrated that the Boidot ageing method, based on wing feather characteristics, provides a reliable and repeatable approach for large-scale monitoring of harvested woodcock

Overall, the results support the conclusion that the Hungarian woodcock population has remained demographically stable during the monitoring period with no signs of recruitment decline or age imbalance.